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## Group releases plan for changes to local education

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AUSTIN, Texas (KXAN) -- A coalition of business leaders, politicians, and school leaders released a blueprint Thursday morning for changes to education in Central Texas.

The [E3 Alliance](#) is the group that has come up with a strategic plan to help students do better in school, because studies show 40 percent of students entering kindergarten are 18 months behind where they are supposed to be.

The group has four big objectives:

- 95 percent of children enter kindergarted ready by 2020.
- By 2015, eighth graders across subpopulations achieve 20 percent higher outcomes on state assessments.
- By 2010, 20,010 more Central Texas students enroll in college.
- Community-based organizations work together to create succesful conditions for learning and achievement

The group is working with schools in the five county Metropolitan Statistical Area. That includes 35 school districts, 15 charters, and seven higher-education institutions. At Akins High School in South Austin, there is a special engineering curriculum that teaches students how to apply the math and science they're learning in the classroom in a real-life setting creating rockets.

"In geometry, you learn how to do the area of a trapezoid, and every kid says, 'What the heck do I need this for? Why does this matter?'," said Kyle Voge, an engineering teacher at Akins High School. "Well, all these rockets up here have trapezoid-shaped fins, and the size and the shape and the area and all that actually matters."

The idea of applying a real-life setting is the catalyst for a new approach to education to get students college and career ready.

"If you look at eighth grade TAKS scores, you'll see often 50 percent achievement gaps in passing rates between different student populations, due to math and science scores, so they're really struggling," said E3 Alliance President Susan Dawson.

That's why Thursday, the E3 Alliance is releasing the Blueprint for the Future, starting with getting students the proper education in kindergarten.

"They have the kind of environment and support in the community to get the kinds of help they need, whether it's tutoring, whether it's support outside of classes," said Dawson.

That way, by the time students reach high school, rocket-science class puts their knowledge to a practical purpose and possibly earns them college credit.

"This is real-world stuff they're doing here, not some silly little worksheet or questions from the back of the chapter," said Voge.

The hope is with these types of practical classes, it will keep students from getting frustrated and dropping out. Every year, the Central Texas area loses \$425 million in economic growth because of drop-outs.

"I'm very optimistic, and I believe I live in a community that is optimistic," said State Sen. Kirk Watson.

To put this plan into action, the group that presented Thursday will continue to meet with school districts and community leaders to rally for funding and resources.

This is a 10- to 15-year plan that will take lot of work to implement.

For more details on the educational Blueprint for Change, tune in to the KXAN Austin News 5 and 6 p.m. newscasts.



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